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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 IO-14 ACDA-19 SSO-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

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---------- 119752
R 131025Z DEC 73
FM USINT CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4672
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USUN NEW YORK 2334

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 3971

BEIRUT POUCH BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI EG
SUBJECT: CHANGES IN EGYPTIAN MILITARY COMMAND

1. DECEMBER 13 CAIRO PRESS ANNOUNCES FOLLOWING CHANGES IN MILITARY COMMAND:

(A) MAJOR GENERAL MOHAMMED ABDEL GHANI AL-GAMASY AS CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES.
(B) MAJOR GENERAL HASAN AL-GREIDLY AS CHIEF OF OPERATIONS.
(C) MAJOR GENERAL FUAD AZIZ GHALI AS COMMANDER OF THE SECOND ARMY.
(D) MAJOR GENERAL AHMED BEDAWI SAYYID AHMED AS COMMANDER OF THE THIRD ARMY.

2. PRESS STATES CHANGES IN COMMAND WERE RECOMMENDED BY WAR MINISTER AHMED ISMAIL, TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION NEED FOR
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OFFICERS WITH COMBAT EXPERIENCE AT GHQ, AND TO PROVIDE FOR

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PROMOTIONS OF OTHER OFFICERS TO COMMAND POSITIONS. AHRAM ALSO NOTES THAT MAJOR GENERAL ABDEL MUN'IM WASIL AND MAJOR GENERAL ABDEL MUN'IM KHALIL, SECOND AND THIRD ARMY COMMANDERS REPLACED BY GHALI AND SAYYID AHMED HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED TO GHQ AS ASSISTANTS TO WAR MINISTER ASMAIL.

3. COMMENT: MOST DRAMATIC ASPECT OF CHANGE IS REMOVAL OF SHIZLI AS COS. IT HAS BEEN RUMORED THAT SOME SUCH CHANGE MIGHT OCCUR SINCE FAILURE OF EGYPTIAN ARMY TO CONTAIN ISRAEL'S THRUST INTO WEST BANK IN TERMINAL PHASE OF OCTOBER WAR. SHAZLI MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN SACKED FOR RECENTLY ATTEMPTING TO PROMOTE HIMSELF TOO MUCH. IN ANY EVENT, SHAZLI IS A CONVENIENT SCAPEGOAT.

4. CHANGE OF MILITARY COMMAND WOULD ALSO SEEM TO REMOVE GAMASY FROM FURTHER TALKS WITH ISRAELIS AT KM 101 OR ELSEWHERE. AS CHIEF OF STAFF HE WILL BE FULLY OCCUPIED WITH EGYPTIAN MILITARY MATTERS.

5. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT APPOINTMENT OF GHALI AS SECOND ARMY COMMANDER VISIBLY PLACES A COPT IN A POSITION OF MAJOR COMMAND WITHIN EGYPTIAN ARMY. AT END OF OCTOBER WAR, STORIES BEGAN TO CIRCULATE THAT ONE REASON FOR ISRAELI BREAKTHROUGH AT DEVERSOIR WAS TREACHERY OF A COPTIC COMMANDER; A COUNTER STORY, PROBABLY GOE INSPIRED, BEGAN SHORTLY THEREAFTER TO EFFECT THAT FIRST EGYPTIAN FLAG IN SINAI WAS PLANTED BY COPTIC OFFICER. WE BELIEVE GHALI'S APPOINTMENT IS INTENDED IN PART TO SIGNIFY SADAT'S CONTINUED CONFIDENCE IN EGYPT'S COPTIC MINORITY.

6. FINALLY, WE SURMISE THIS GENERAL STAFF SHAKE-UP IS ALSO AIMED AT STRENGTHENING SADAT'S TIES WITH CAPABLE AND AGGRESSIVE SENIOR OFFICERS OF KNOWN POPULARITY AMONG LOWER RANKS BY REWARDING THEM FOR SUCCESSFUL COMBAT ROLE. VISIBILITY GIVEN TO THEIR PROMOTION AND TO MILITARY CHANGE ASSISTS SADAT IN MAINTAINING CURRENT HIGH LEVEL OF TENSION BY EMPHASIZING EGYPTIAN ARMY'S CONTINUED COMBAT READINESS.
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